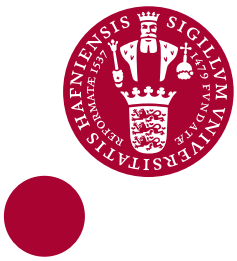

Visions of Punishment

On Susan Crile's Abu Ghraib Drawings

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DEVIKA SHARMA

12 Visions of Punishment: On Susan Crile's Abu Ghraib Drawings*

A decade after their publication, why should we keep looking at the infamous torture images from the Abu Ghraib prison outside Baghdad? One reason to keep looking, analysing and discussing these images is that they may help us grasp central aspects of contemporary American penal culture, insofar as they provide insights into conditions not only for prisoners in American war prisons abroad, but for the more than two million people who are incarcerated in the US as well. The Abu Ghraib prison certainly differed significantly from state and federal prison systems within the US, not least because of an entirely different and complex jurisdiction, and its specificity should therefore not be ignored. Yet, as has been discussed by several commentators and socio-legal scholars in the wake of the Abu Ghraib scandal, the torture conveyed in the digital snapshots that became public seemed conditioned by a wider penal discourse developed in concurrence with correctional contexts within the United States.[1] Torture is evidently central to these images in terms of what they depict as well as in terms of

* Portions of this article first appeared in my book (in Danish) *Amerikanske Fængselsbilleder. Kunst, kultur og indesperring i samtidens USA* (Copenhagen: Tiderne Skifter, 2011), 105–35.

1 Michelle Brown, '"Setting the Conditions" for Abu Ghraib: The Prison Nation Abroad', *American Quarterly* 57/3 (2005); Allen Feldman, 'On the Actuarial Gaze: From 9/11 to Abu Ghraib', *Cultural Studies* 19/2 (2005); Judith Greene, 'From Abu Ghraib to America: Examining Our Harsh Prison Culture', *Ideas for an Open Society* 4/1 (2004); Mark Danner, *Torture and Truth: America, Abu Ghraib, and the War on Terror* (New York: New York Review Books, 2004). As for more general discussions of the particular 'Americanness' of the culture of humiliation and voyeurism exposed by the photos see Susan Sontag, 'Regarding the Torture of Others', *New York Times*

their very production and distribution. As journalist Mark Danner has suggested, even the act of taking the pictures served as a kind of torture, in the sense that the snapshots were visual vehicles for a multiplication in time and space of the shame and humiliation involved in the acts of torture themselves.[2] But central to the Abu Ghraib photos is, at the same time, a certain *non-exceptional*, non-covert, and visually highly dramatised culture of punishment, the same culture according to which the domestic prison system is organised in the US.

In Abu Ghraib, the prison guard was no unseen yet seeing person in a central surveillance position. Instead, the guards actively took part in a form of punishment sustained by shaming, degradation, and visual dramatisation. To align my argument with Michel Foucault's history of punishment, we could say that in Abu Ghraib the paradigmatic panoptic institution, the prison, proved hospitable to non-panoptic, theatrical practices of punishment. Not only did the guards locate themselves squarely within the photographic gaze, the distribution of the photos among fellow soldiers, family, and friends likewise effectively reversed the fundamental idea of the panopticon: as a result of this wide distribution, it was no longer a case of the few observing the many, but of the many observing the few. Accordingly, the power playing itself out in and through these images differed in various ways from the discrete power of discipline analysed by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1975).

The visual dramatisation of punishment, as well as the production and publication of shame so crucial to the photos and the affective situations they convey, is central to contemporary American punishment. The current focus on afflicting shame is manifest in practices such as chain gangs, zebra-striped uniforms, and public databases of convicts, and moreover, recent years have seen a resurgence of what we may think of as *scarlet letter sentencing* in the guise of so-called *shaming penalties*. Over the last fifteen years, state courts have thus experimented with

(23 May 2004); and Slavoj Žižek, 'Move the Underground: What's Wrong with Fundamentalism?' 2005. <www.lacan.com> accessed 17 October 2013.

2 Danner, *Torture and Truth*, 19, 23.

imposing shame penalties for violations such as drunk driving, domestic violence, burglary and drug possession, by sentencing felons to wearing clothing stating their crimes, post signs announcing their convictions, or otherwise engage in humiliating rituals. In Oregon, a convicted sex offender was ordered to post signs beside his house and car saying 'Dangerous Sex Offender: No Children Allowed'.[3] In a plea bargain in Pennsylvania, a woman and her adult daughter were ordered to stand outside the courthouse holding signs reading 'I stole from a nine year-old girl on her birthday! Don't steal or this could happen to you!'[4] While such penalties are clearly meant as deterrents and as expressions of the moral values of the community, legal scholars and philosophers such as Martha Nussbaum and Jeffrey Abramson have poignantly argued that these alternative correctional practices risk becoming rituals of public humiliation, dehumanisation, and mob justice, not to mention the arbitrariness involved in the current legal administration of shame.[5] What is significant with regard to these strands of the current visual culture of punishment is that in contrast to the discrete surveillance techniques of the panopticon, such shaming penalties punish by virtue of public ridicule and stigmatisation. Here, punishment is not only meted out by the state, but by the humiliating gaze of the public. This gaze cannot

3 Jeffrey Abramson, 'Response to Professor Kahan', *Federal Sentencing Reporter* 12/1 (1999).

4 *Daily Mail* (5 November 2009) <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1225561/Women-stole-giftcard-birthday-girl-9-hold-signs-shame-town-centre.html> accessed 17 October 2013.

5 Shaming penalties form part of a more general turn within American penal culture to marginalising and incapacitating individual and collective bodies. During the last three decades the American systems of crime reduction and penal justice have thus undergone a radical transformation, which may be roughly described as a passage from the disciplinary and rehabilitative model of the modern prison analysed by Foucault to a late modern practice of punishment prioritising risk management, safety, vengeance, and simple segregation. For an overview of this generally acknowledged transformation, see David Garland, *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2001); and David Garland, ed., *Mass Imprisonment: Social Causes and Consequences* (London: Sage Publications, 2001).

be controlled by law, and this, in a sense, is the very essence of this kind of punishment. With the Abu Ghraib photos as radical icons of non-panoptic visual cultures of punishment, we can begin to register a general revival of theatricality in the current US culture of punishment to the extent that the panopticon today co-exists with correctional practices characterised by shaming and spectacle.[6]

Two larger stories, then, converge in these images. On the one hand, we find the story of American torture, the war on terror, and its policies. On the other, we find the story of apparently commonplace contemporary US practices of punishment. Taking as my starting point the American artist Susan Crile's series of pastel drawings and paintings, *Abu Ghraib: Abuse of Power*, my main focus in this chapter will be the precarious bodily states produced by practices of punishment that are profoundly shaming and essentially theatrical. As Judith Butler has pointed out, the Abu Ghraib photos show that in the world of the war prison, some humans qualify as humans, while others do not. According to Butler, these snapshots provide 'evidence that a break from the norm governing the subject of rights has taken place and that something called 'humanity' is at issue here'.[7] What is immediately significant in Susan Crile's interpretation of this universe is that her drawings do not exactly restore integrity to the frail bodies depicted or somehow bring back their humanity as something evident for us to contemplate. Rather, she investigates what the body is like when it has fallen out of the field of the human. In my discussion of this series of drawings, I will also touch upon their relation to the photographic source and to the genre of atrocity photography. Here, my suggestion is that one of the effects of reimagining and interpreting the world of the war prison through the medium of drawing is that these images, and the

6 It could be argued that theatrical elements of correctional practices always co-existed with panoptical surveillance techniques in the United States. For a discussion of the continuation of spectacular punishment, see for instance Brian Jarvis, *Cruel and Unusual: Punishment and US Culture* (London: Pluto Press, 2004).

7 Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004), 78.

events to which they attest, break away from the fate of serving as emblems of the exceptional.[8]

Chalk

The collected works of Susan Crile fall into two distinct categories. On one side we find the contemplative abstractions that have formed the backbone of Crile's œuvre since the 1970s. This work is characterised by shared formal features borrowed from such diverse sources as patterns on snakeskin, mosaics, Persian carpets, and Italian architecture. From sharp geometrical shapes to more organic forms, we may think of Crile's work as an abstract kind of landscape painting – Crile herself calls her work 'eccentric geometrical abstraction'.[9] On the other side we find four markedly political series of drawings and paintings. In large oil panoramas the *Fires of War* series from the early 1990s depicts burning oil fields in Kuwait during the first Gulf War. The series *9/11* from 2002 is based on snapshots of Manhattan in the wake of the terrorist attack, while the series *In Our Name* (2010–11) examines confinement and abuse in settings such as Guantanamo. In her framing of the images of torture in *Abu Ghraib: Abuse of Power*, Susan Crile has focused primarily on the postures of and relations between the human figures. In several cases, she has eased the subjects out of their contexts, so that several of the drawings are not immediately recognisable as reproductions of the photographic source. Generally, since the direct gaze of the

8 The Abu Ghraib photographs of course by now have their own cultural history, traveling through diverse contexts of analysis and interpretation: art exhibitions, court-martials, critical commentary, popular culture, and research settings. A discussion of the relations between various framings and modes of reception falls outside the scope of this chapter.

9 I interviewed Susan Crile in December 2006, and this particular description of her own work dates from here. See my article (in Danish) 'Torturtegninger: Susan Criles manøvrer med mennesker' KRITIK 40/183 (2007), 129–36.

guards has been obstructed by Crile's cropping of the image, the sense of triumph and merriment is also absent from these drawings, if not similarly excised from our simultaneous memory of the photos themselves.

In *The Body in Pain* (1987), Elaine Scarry describes the various ways in which physical torture undoes the world of the prisoner. During torture, Scarry suggests, the prisoner becomes invisible to himself, because his idea of *being* a self falls apart. Simultaneously, the prisoner is in a sense invisible to the torturer, who does not *recognise* the humanity and suffering of the prisoner. When the correlates of the self are undone in this way, the body on the contrary becomes critically present, as Scarry notes. In the case of torture, it is precisely the goal of the torturer to render the body of the prisoner urgently present; to make the body 'emphatically and crushingly present by destroying it'.[10] In the process of torture the distance separating prisoner and torturer has become the greatest distance that can separate two human beings, and in this process of distancing, the prisoner is rendered, in Scarry's term, 'ghostly'.

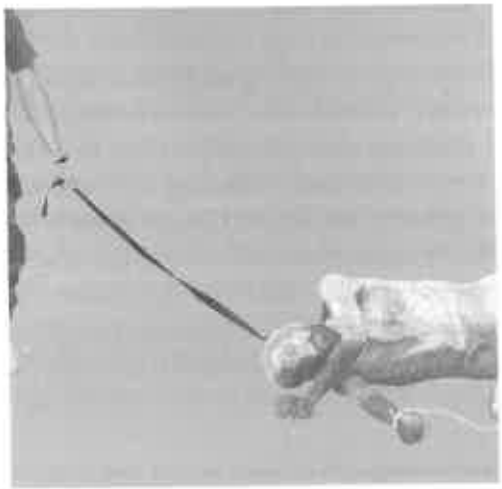

Fig. 12.1: Susan Crile. *Private England Dragging a Prisoner on a Leash*, 2005. White chalk, pastel and charcoal on paper. Credit: Susan Crile.

10 Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 49.

Elaine Scarry's description of the paradoxical status of the body subjected to torture also sucessfully captures two of the most striking features of Susan Crile's Abu Ghraib drawings. Firstly, the impression that the prisoner has become partly invisible and ghost-like; secondly, the impression that the distance between the two types of human figures has become unbridgeable. Thus, in Crile's interpretation of the world of the Abu Ghraib prison, there exist two types of human bodies. On one hand we find a naked, skinny, and fragile body, and, on the other, we find a body protected by boots, gloves, and several layers of clothing, a body that seems heavy and massive. What these two bodily types have in common, however, is that they are exactly *types*: these bodies hold no evident personality, and the few faces not turned away or hidden behind hoods figure not as mirrors of the soul, but as surfaces fleetingly registering fear or even death.

Fig. 12.2: Susan Crile. *Arranged: Naked Mound of Flesh*, 2005. Pastel and white chalk on paper. Credit: Susan Crile.

The white, chalk-like figure is the most distinctive element of these drawings. Here, the outline of the body of the prisoner is sketched out, but the material qualities of the chalk indicate that the limits of the body are fragile and might in fact be wiped out, as if softening up the prisoner implies

softening up the self and its limits. In a catalogue for one of her exhibitions, Crile herself mentions that, to her, the white chalk symbolises among other things the figures mantled in ashes fleeing the World Trade Center after the terrorist attack in 2001.[11] From this point of view, the white chalk establishes a visual connection between these two emblematic moments in the war on terror; the terrorist attack and the Abu Ghraib scandal. At the same time, the white prisoners in Crile's drawings call forth associations with a legal and political phenomenon also related to the war on terror, namely the so-called *ghost detainees*. This term signals, of course, that these prisoners have become politically and legally invisible.

The tension between an acutely present body and a destroyed body – the tension which for Scarry characterises a situation of torture – is made tangible in the chalky qualities of the prisoner's bodies. On the one hand, the whiteness emphasises the outline of the body by making it stand out radiantly from the background of the picture. The whiteness thus accentuates the ecstatic presence of the prisoners' bodies *as* bodies, an insistent presence derived also from their nakedness. But on the other hand, these white bodies seem, simultaneously, strangely unbodily, incorporeal. Thus if we look at the image *Arranged: Naked Mound of Flesh*, it is striking how badly the flesh of the title describes the object of the image. Of course, the picture does represent a mound of bodies, but even though these bodies are absolutely exposed, absolutely unprivate, the image does not readily connote flesh. Rather, the bodies appear dry and empty. In Crile's work, the chalk simply resists representing the carnality and fleshiness of the human body.

As a means of rendering of the human figure, we often associate the white line of chalk with a crime scene and with the forensic framing of a body no longer present. The chalky figures in Crile's tableaux are utterly reduced to their bodies, which therefore appear strangely incorporeal. At a crime scene, a surface has taken the place of the body once framed by the white line of chalk; similarly, in several of Crile's pictures we see bits of surface and space through the partly transparent figure, so that the limit

11 Susan Crile, *Abu Ghraib: Abuse of Power*. Exhibition catalogue (New York: The Bertha and Karl Leubsdorf Art Gallery, 2006).

between interior and exterior collapses. The prisoners' bodies in Crile's drawings attest to precisely such a bodily vacancy. These bodies are not exactly dead, but they are nevertheless somehow absent – from themselves, from our common repertoire of images of the human body. With regard to our normal ideas of the carnal body, Crile's drawings seem to suggest that the human body shelters a profound un-bodiliness, which shows exactly when the body has been reduced to sheer body.

Few images in the Abu Ghraib series present us with an impression of space like that in *Arranged: Naked Mound of Flesh*. What is significant here is the fact that Crile does not use this spatial effect in order to indicate a space for human activity. Rather, the depth in the image signals a vacuum effect, the lines leading into a condensed darkness, the space appearing to be a void. The spatial effect in the image thus connotes a kind of black hole, as if the prison space mirrored the legal void engulfing the prisoners.

Theatres of Shame

In an essay titled 'Neighbors and Other Monsters' (2005), Slavoj Žižek has discussed the relation between self-exposure and shame in a way that seems helpful when trying to understand the implications of the current revival of theatricality in US penal culture. We are currently witnessing, Žižek suggests, a tragicomic reversal of Jeremy Bentham's plans for (and George Orwell's later concerns about) a panoptic society: 'Today, anxiety arises from the prospect of *not* being exposed to the Other's gaze all the time, so that the subject needs the camera's gaze as a kind of ontological guarantee of his or her being,' Žižek writes.[12] For instance, according to Žižek, the contemporary ubiquitous and shameless use of webcams signals

12 Slavoj Žižek, 'Neighbors and Other Monsters', in Slavoj Žižek, Eric L. Santner and Kenneth Reinhard, eds, *Neighbors: Three Inquiries in Political Theology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 180.

that today we share a constant need to feel a gaze confirm our existence as subjects. As one of various possible shameless subject positions, Žižek mentions what he calls 'the perverse sadist'. The perverse sadist is not primarily interested in causing the other physical harm. Rather, the sadist's aim is to make the other ashamed of enjoying the situation forced upon him or her. The sadist makes himself an instrument, so to speak, for the other's unbearable realisation of his or her enjoyment of humiliation.

In the context of the Abu Ghraib images, I find Žižek's account relevant not as a possible psychology of the torturers, but as a micro-sociology of shame and shamelessness. Regarding the photos from Abu Ghraib, his observations are productive in at least two ways. Firstly, the photos confirm that, as we have already noted, the basic anti-panoptic structure evident in the perpetual self-exposure emphasised by Žižek has indeed engaged the exemplary panoptic institution, the prison. Secondly, the photographs suggest that theatrical self-exposure might invite, as its reflection, a theatrical exposure of others, as implied by Žižek's account of perverse sadism. In these photos we see that the effort of the guards to appear on a stage and before a public presupposes a theatrical framing of the other. Starting from these photos, one can then distinguish between two forms of perverse sadism, which are here joined in a kind of alliance. One form is active and, in a sense, shameless, while the other form is passive and shameful.

Elaine Scarry notes that during torture, the body of the prisoner is transformed into a weapon against the prisoner himself. The senses, the needs of the body, and its ways of touching itself: all of these bodily capacities are turned against the prisoner's own body.[13] If we place Scarry's description of the transformation of a body into a self-destructive weapon in tandem with Žižek's account of perverse sadism, we have, I would like to suggest here, a framework for understanding the complex mixture of shame, shamelessness, and torture characterising the events in Abu Ghraib as they are represented by the notorious photographs and interpreted in Crile's drawings. For if a scene of torture constitutes a purely antagonistic relation between two persons, as Scarry suggests, we see that here this

13 Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, 48.

antagonistic relation is meant to be internalised, through shaming, in the prisoner himself. Thus, in this sense, the forced masturbation in Crile's *In Line to Perform* shows a line of bodies becoming their own enemies: the forced sexual acts depicted in both photographs and drawings indicate that the prisoner's potential enjoyment of the humiliating acts were central to the torture.

Fig. 12.3: Susan Crile. *Naked, Piled, Hooded Prisoners, Flesh to Flesh*, 2005. White chalk, pastel and charcoal on paper. Credit: Susan Crile.

In these drawings, Susan Crile has paid more attention to the conditions of the fragile figures than to the soldiers' posing for the camera. Therefore we do not see Charles Graner and Sabrina Harman with their arms around each other in the background of *Naked, Piled, Hooded Prisoners, Flesh to Flesh*. In other words, Crile has focused on the passive and shameful side of perverse sadism. When looking at this painting, the theatrical aspect of the arrangement is striking: the pile of bodies looks like a group of performers in one last clever constellation before the fall of the curtain. In drawings such as *Arranged: Naked Mound of Flesh* and *Naked, Piled, Hooded Prisoners*, the fact that Crile has omitted the guards and their cheery gaze into the camera provides the viewer with the sense that the pile of bodies is somehow

a staged arrangement in honour of him or her. In this way, Crile's framing is also a de-framing – reconfiguring the structures of seeing by erasing the direct gaze into the camera – opening up new ways of interpreting these images while simultaneously raising questions about our, the viewers', part in the alliance between shame and shamelessness performed before us. If Crile has in several instances withheld the guards' right to be seen, to be included in the field of vision, she has not spared her viewers the sense of complicity in the staged, orchestrated scenes.

Seeing and Feeling

We can situate the graphic snapshots from the Abu Ghraib prison squarely within the genre of war trophy photography. As Hilary Roberts notes of this genre, trophy photographs are 'generated by photographers of a dominant military power, often without official sanction or the knowledge of those depicted. The initial purpose of such photographs is usually to serve as a form of souvenir'.[14] Within the wider formal context of atrocity photography, a recurrent critical discussion considers the horror and grief provoked, or not provoked, by atrocity photography and the actions to which such affective response may or may not give rise. Taking up Susan Sontag's well-known skepticism regarding the power of images to do more than move us in passing, Judith Butler suggests in *Frames of War* that responding affectively to images of the suffering of others may very well carry critical and political significance. Without responsiveness, no sense of responsibility; without a sense of responsibility, no political change, Butler argues. But responsiveness to the suffering of others requires that these others appear as potential subjects of mourning for us, the viewers of the image. And

14 Hilary Roberts, 'War Trophy Photographs: Proof or Pornography?', in Geoffrey Batchen, Mick Gidley, Nancy K. Miller and Jay Prosser, eds, *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crises* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 202.

'*grievability*' as an assigned quality is tacitly regulated by both the actual discursive and visual frames used to represent suffering, and by more general cultural norms. As a function of such interpretive frames, grievability is glaringly unevenly distributed globally, and a contemporary critique of power ought therefore, Butler suggests, to invest itself in rendering visible the interpretive frames through which certain lives and the suffering of these human lives appear irrelevant.

What is at stake then in the reconstructions and cropping of Susan Crile's interpretation of the atmosphere of the war prison? What do we do with what we see here; where do we store it? Peggy Phelan suggests that the Abu Ghraib photographs are traumatic in the sense that they both document and produce a certain blindness, a failure of seeing.[15] But Crile's drawings are not exactly traumatic, they do not travel by way of shock, and if they call on us to act, their call is not primarily of a familiarly horrifying, sickening, and outrageous kind. Does this mean that these drawings fail to render the fragile bodies grievable, and that they thus present the viewer with a morally indifferent framing of suffering? My suggestion is that the remarkable affective flatness of these tableaux in comparison with the photographic snapshots that inspire them – the slowing and cooling down of the horror, shamelessness, and pain produced by both the softness of the chalk and pastel on paper and the cropping of the images – is indeed an invitation to look and feel differently, but not indifferently. The effect of this cooling down is not, I would argue, one of unresponsiveness or ethical apathy. On the contrary, the affective work initiated by Crile's drawings is to make us feel the framework through which distant, suffering bodies are most often made to appear irrelevant to the Western media consumer. Here, since the triumphant gaze of the guards is in several cases erased, we do not get to *see* this interpretive framework in action. Instead we get to *feel* the chilling effects of the typically dehumanising framing of distant others and their apparently irrelevant pain, because we are deprived of the

15 Peggy Phelan, 'Atrocity and Action: The Performative Force of the Abu Ghraib Photographs', in Geoffrey Batchen, Mick Gidley, Nancy K. Miller and Jay Prosser, eds, *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crises* (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), 55.

opportunity to feel the strong pangs of shock, compassion, and indignation that we have come to expect from our confrontation with images of atrocity, and from these prison motifs in particular. Crile's Abu Ghraib drawings do not draw heavily on our morally suitable feelings. Instead of turning away in horror, we are invited to stay with the event and its reflections. This aesthetic strategy, of making the images *bearable*, is not, however, a strategy of acceptance, of glossing over or covering up. It is, on the contrary, a strategy that effectively prevents these images from becoming emblems of the exceptional.

Literary scholar Sianne Ngai has coined the term 'noncathartic aesthetics' in order to describe art and literature that is about or produces small, unprestigious feelings, or seems to withstand the emotional outlet of its viewers and readers as well as of its subjects.[16] According to Ngai, such ignoble, amoral or merely hesitant feelings share a diagnostic potential in so far as they testify to social experiences of obstructed agency and passivity. As I understand them, Susan Crile's Abu Ghraib drawings are exactly non-cathartic in their aesthetic configuration, and if their hesitance to evoke strong emotions testifies to experiences of obstructed agency and unwelcome passivity, it is to experiences of passivity on behalf of both these painfully typified, exposed, and exploited bodies and on behalf of ourselves, the viewers of the images. In other words, this is not an aesthetic that pacifies, but rather one that actively interprets the conjunction of several experiences of passivity, however asymmetrical these experiences are.

Perhaps the passivity and obstructed agency interpreted here is also that of atrocity photography itself as a mode of thinking and sensing the world. Crile herself seems to suggest as much, writing in a catalogue text that:

> Photos have become such a part of the fast expendable information age we live in that they have created a glut, where the sheer mass and volume of photographic images have made the eye the most overused sense. Drawing, the use of chalk and charcoal, the texture of paper, speaks to our sense of touch. Touch slows down the hungry and impatient appetite of the eye [...].[17]

16 Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).
17 Crile, *Abu Ghraib: Abuse of Power*, 7.

Slowing down our way of looking seems to me an accurate description of the effect of *Abu Ghraib: Abuse of Power*. This is not a question of posing drawing against photography, touching against seeing, or thinking against feeling, but of thinking with the senses, slowly touching that which is seen. But most importantly, perhaps, this less impatient aesthetic moves us beyond the questions of 'What do I feel?' and 'Do I feel enough?' These drawings are not 'powerful' in the sense of lifting us out of ourselves in confrontation with spectacular trauma and exception. Yet their slowness and their foregrounding of passivity invite new structures of looking at a familiar scene of suffering, structures producing in turn alternative responses, alternative senses of responsibility.

Circulating Bodies and Images

In a study of political violence in Northern Ireland, media scholar Allen Feldman shows how marginalised, invisible groups in a given society may serve as vehicles for distributing messages and values central to that particular society. Feldman illustrates this point by describing two photographs. The first depicts one of the Parisian sandwich men described by Walter Benjamin as emblematic of the spectacle of commodification. The sandwich men walked the streets of Paris in the 1930s bearing advertising boards mounted on the fronts and backs of their bodies. Ironically, Feldman notes, the sandwich men were often homeless or in other ways living on the absolute margins of the capitalist economy they simultaneously embodied and boosted. The second photo from the same period depicts a German Jew marching between two policemen. His pants and shoes have been taken from him; instead he carries a placard announcing that he is Jewish and that he has no complaints about the Nazis.[18] Both of these

18 Allen Feldman, *Formations of Violence: The Narrative of the Body and Political Terror in Northern Ireland* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 7.

images, Feldman argues, show ways in which the marginalised body can serve as spectacular medium. The sandwich man and the placard-bearing Jew act as political 'texts', ideological screens permitting 'the state and the crowd to exchange messages on the reciprocal constitution of otherness and community. The body as a social type and not an individual is being walked through these streets'.[19]

Feldman's description of the ways in which marginalised bodies may circulate as vehicles for communicating and disseminating important societal messages is a fruitful framework for understanding the dramatic element of both the Abu Ghraib photos and the current use of shaming penalties in the United States. In both cases, the risk-bearing bodies are visually marked as political texts announcing their own unworthiness, even their inhumanity. These bodies are marginalised, yet they are not politically superfluous. Rather, the shameful and publicly circulated penal bodies act as performers of a distinct political landscape; they become spatial units of power. And the power that these bodies are at once subjected to and manifest is not a discretely disciplining power, but a power whose devices include shame, visual drama and entertainment.

Susan Crile's interpretation of the Abu Ghraib universe suggests that shaming acts of torture committed there profoundly affected the body's bodiliness. The human body became a typified, transparent body. At once present and absent, the body in these images seems empty, just as the law subjecting the body seemed empty. Here, the 'bodylessness' of the body corresponds to the lawlessness of law. Moreover, Crile's drawings invite ways of responding to these acts that follow extended routes into our affective infrastructures by producing new structures of seeing suffering.

In the late modern instances of scarlet letter punishment, the offender is realised as criminal not only in the eyes of the public, but by the eyes of the public. As the photos from Abu Ghraib made painfully clear, we need to examine more closely the relationship between law and visual practices of shaming that are thought to be effective exactly because they cannot be controlled by the law. In Abu Ghraib a handful of lower rank soldiers

19 Feldman, *Formations of Violence*, 8.

acted as instruments of punishment. With the re-emergence of shaming penalties and other forms of punishment based on theatres of humiliation, the performer of punishment in the contemporary US has to some extent become identical with the ordinary American citizen.

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PART IV

Screens, Cameras and Surveillance